During Canadian Library Week, and the Year Around the Slogan:

'WAKE UP and READ!'

By H. WAKEFIELD MAUNSELL

FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS man has felt the need of books—for enlightenment, consolation, and refreshment of spirit. In these days of stress and strain the need is even greater.

Television, though an excellent medium of entertainment, and sometimes of education, cannot readily go into the deeper problems of the spirit, nor can it satisfy the real student's craving for knowledge. Carlyle has said: "The true university is a collection of books," and this is as true today as it ever was.

For thousands of years libraries have served mankind as repositories for books. Alexandria had famous libraries before the time of Julius Caesar. According to their librarians, one of these contained 42,800 volumes or rolls, the other, 490,000.

After Caxton's printing press was set up in 1474, the number of books was greatly multiplied. Free education meant a vast increase in the numbers of readers, until today 5,000 million books are produced every year. Libraries everywhere have a great part to play in keeping alive reader interest.

Canadiain Library Week has just concluded. It was intended to stimulate enthusiasm for reading in Canada, and help make known what is available to the public, by means of newspapers, radio and television, talks, and posters.

British Columbia has an especially fine library service, consisting of public libraries in towns and cities, regional libraries, of which the Fraser Valley is a fine example, institutional libraries, such as those of Essondale, the Boys' Industrial School, the Girls' Industrial School. The library in Oakalla is considered one of the finest prison libraries in Canada.

JUSTLY PROUD

BRITISH COLUMBIA is justly proud of its school library system.

A high school librarian has said: "The library encourages individualism, and is one way of providing for individual differences and interests in a school system geared to the mass."

Every secondary school with an adequate number of pupils is provided with library rooms, containing book collections and reference material, and the students are trained in the use of the library.

In single room country schools the public library commission, a branch of the department of education, provides small libraries through a headquarters in Victoria, and branch offices in Prince George and Dawson Creek.

The open shelf library is used by both teachers and pupils in outlying areas. There is also a teachers' professional library for the exclusive use of teachers.

The travelling library, working from headquarters in Victoria, cares for the needs of those in camps and small communities. Lighthouse keepers are serviced by this means. The weatherships, too, are supplied with books.

The "Bookmobile" is a familiar and welcome sight in many scattered communities. It covers seven different routes every two weeks, travelling many miles. When it stops, 20 people can look at the books at one time.

SPLENDID SOURCE

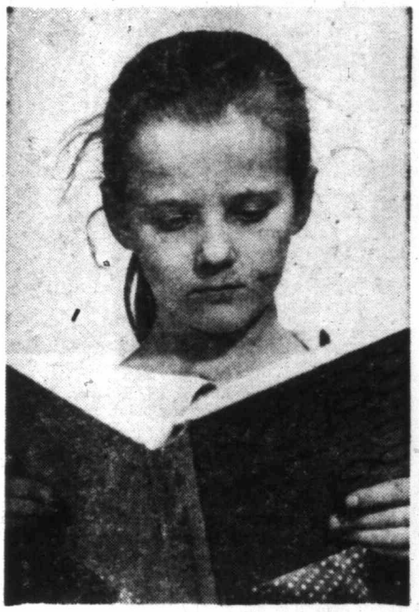
FOR ALL THESE services there is no postal or freight charge.

We must not forget to mention the wonderful source material to be found in the provincial archives library. People come from long distances to work on material to be found there.

The university library is a very important part of the B.C. library system, not only for the wide range of books for the use of students, but also for a valuable collection of Canadiana, added to yearly. Victoria College has its own library of fine books at the university level. This will be greatly augmented as the college comes of age as a university in its own right.

B.C.'s library service owes its progress to many public-spirited people, both men and women. The first library in British Columbia was owned by John McKay, surgeon of the Experiment, a fur-trading vessel, that operated around Nootka Sound in 1786.

The North West Company made a practice of providing libraries for its northern posts. Daniel William Harmon in 1813 wrote: "If I were deprived of these silent companions many a gloomy hour would pass over me."



This is Linda Smith, nine years old. Like many youngsters of her age, she is already well acquainted with the Victoria Public Library. She needs no reminder to "wake up and read." Reading is her leisure-time relaxation.—Ryan Studio.

Thirteen hundred books of the Hudson's Bay Company are still to be seen in Hudson Bay House in Winnipeg, among them copies of two magazines edited by Charles Dickens, "Household Words" and "All the Year-Round."

In view of the recent Centennial celebrations, it is interesting to note that Sir James Douglas collected a library. He had books sent out yearly from England. Among his instructions for new books were: "An assortment of pleasant and instructive books for young ladies."

PROGRESS BEGINS

NOT UNTIL 1919, however, was any great progress made in regard to public libraries. From 1891, they were governed by the Free Libraries Act. The larger cities only were adequately served. Then came extensive study in B.C. of library legislation. This led to the passing of the Public Libraries Act of 1919. This is still the basis of library service today. The first board of members of the Library Commission included: M. P. Jackson, KC, MLA, of Victoria; Dr. G. G. Sedgewick, head of the English department of the University of British Columbia, and Dr. Helen Stewart, librarian of Victoria Public Library.

In 1927, Dr. Norman F. Black headed an expansion committee for a scheme that had never before been attempted. This was the establishment of regional libraries on a co-operative basis. For the Fraser Valley project, during the years 1950-1954, the Carnegie grants totalled $130,000.

The "hungry thirties" may have slowed down progress, but even in these difficult years the government realized the necessity for providing for the reading public. In 1932 a letter was sent from the Public Library Commission to certain ministers of the Crown expressing appreciation of government efforts "to provide sufficient funds for the commission to carry on during present economic depression." Dr. George Weir, minister of education during the 1930s, was instrumental in drawing together informal study groups into an extensive adult education program, under the guidance of the Public Library Commission.

INSPIRATIONAL

WHAT CAN a library mean to us? Dorothy Thompson expresses her feelings thus: "Within these walls I can learn what men and women have thought, felt, perceived, debated, recorded, affirmed, rejected, stated and sung for thousands of years, down to the present moment. I open the pages of a book and am immediately interested or bored, exhorted or disenchanted."

The library has something for everyone. When one is planning a trip the library can enrich the whole journey. For example, when my wife and I were planning a trip to California, particularly to San Francisco, Monterey and Carmel, a book from the Victoria Public Library gave us an insight into the history of the old Spanish missions. This we found added greatly to the pleasure of our trip.

Anyone with a hobby can find in the library periodicals and books on his choice. The student, too, finds the library invaluable not only for its treasury of reference books, but also for the quiet of the reading room. A businessman or office worker can browse here in his lunch hour. Perhaps he will find an out-of-town newspaper to interest him, or a new idea to aid him from the trade journals of the reference room.

Our library has an excellent music room where free concerts of fine recordings are given. Not only this, but the record lover can borrow new or favorite records to have enjoyment at home in his own leisure time. Films may also be borrowed by clubs or private individuals.

The children's library is a joy to visit. On any day of the week, after school and on school holidays, you will find boys and girls looking for their favorite authors. Here they find answers for homework assignments. They are certainly among the most avid readers. To hear the story of their adventures in books over the parent-teacher broadcast after summer holidays was a revelation in what young people of school age can do in getting the full value of a book. No one can measure the value of a good book on the mind of the young.

In the Carnegie-endowed library assistance is available, and is cheerfully and wisely given by a well-trained staff. Card indexes make research a not-too-arduous task. When one is called upon to give a talk or to write a paper, facts and figures can be gleaned to give authority in the subject matter.

REST, REFRESHMENT

THERE IS A HAPPY band to whom being among books is a rest for the spirit, as well as refreshment for the mind.

In the library, knowledge is to be found, new adventures to be experienced, new inspiration for living to be regained.

Among local authors whose books are in constant demand are those of Emily Carr, for example, "Growing Pains," "The Book of Small," and "The House of All Sorts"; Bruce Hutchinson's "The Unknown Country," "The Fraser," and others; Audrey Alexandria Brown's autobiography of the time spent in a children's hospital, "The Log of a Lame Duck," and her several books of poetry, "The Dryad of Nanaimo," "All Fool's Day," and others; Frank Conibear's novels of the north country, "The Wise One" and "Devil Dog"; James Morton's biography of John Oliver, called "Honest John Oliver"; Catherine Anthony Clark's books for children, "The Golden Pine Cone," "The Sun Horse" and "The One-Winged Dragon," and a book suitable for both children and adults, published in the Centennial year, "The Land of Shining Mountains" by Mary Carr Wright, Myrtle Land and Margaret Steer, a book of history stories of British Columbia.

With all the wealth to be found in such library sources, should we not heed the slogan of Canadian Library Week: "Wake Up and Read?"